



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Committee on Public Health

March 14, 2014

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**Senate Bill 416 - An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations
Regarding Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians**

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports Senate Bill 416 and would like to thank the Public Health Committee for raising the Department's bill. Senate Bill 416 eliminates DPH's certification of Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians (AEMT) beginning in January of 2017. Existing AEMTs would subsequently be certified as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT).

The AEMT level of EMS certification has been in existence in Connecticut for over thirty years. This level of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) certification was originally implemented to improve the outcomes of trauma patients through treatment methods believed to be beneficial at the time. Advances in prehospital medical knowledge have since determined that those interventions do not provide the clinical benefit that was previously believed.

Since Connecticut adopted the 1985 National Standard Curriculum as the basis for training at this level, there has been no advancement in the education, training and clinical practice of AEMT providers. Over the last 29 years, the education components and scope of practice for this certification have advanced considerably on a national level, yet these advances have not been adopted in Connecticut.

Discussions regarding the utility of the AEMT have been ongoing for at least ten years. Much debate has existed regarding whether the level retains any true clinical benefit and if it should be expanded to meet current standards or eliminated from practice. A clear consensus opinion of EMS medical director physicians in Connecticut is that this licensure level should be discontinued. These medical directors were asked to review the recently upgraded national AEMT standards for adoption in Connecticut and provided the following reasons why the AEMT level of service should not be continued: (1) The AEMT at the present level of practice has limited clinical utility; (2) As most AEMT providers are located in rural areas which experience a low volume of patient contacts, it is difficult to maintain skill competency; (3) Sponsor hospitals lack the resources to provide clinical practice opportunities to remediate potential deficiencies in skill competency; (4) EMS training institutions indicated they have inadequate clinical training

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sites available to educate the state's AEMTs at the National Standard without negatively impacting paramedic education. This position was subsequently endorsed by the Connecticut EMS Advisory Board.

In response to provider recruitment and retention concerns, DPH has considered retaining the AEMT level. However, barriers to this course of action include the lack of an education program consistent with current medical practice and the discontinuation of all available standardized and validated examinations for the 1985 AEMT standard.

In response to some of the concerns expressed in more rural areas of the State that utilize a significant number of AEMTs, the Department has worked with EMS physician medical directors to enhance the scope of emergency medical technicians and emergency medical responders (EMR) in ways demonstrated to improve patient outcomes. Examples include the expansion of the use of tourniquets to control bleeding, use of EKG machines to identify heart attacks and continuous positive airway pressure (or CPAP) delivery devices to improve breathing.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health therefore strongly recommends that the AEMT level should be removed from statute and practice in Connecticut. The Department is committed to advancing prehospital care delivery in the state and believes that the AEMT level, as it presently exists in Connecticut, does not meet current standards in prehospital medical care. The Department continues to support advances in EMS scope of practice that have been demonstrated to improve patient care.

The Department also respectfully requests the deletion of the reference to advanced emergency medical technician in lines 290-291 of the raised bill.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.